

**Big Cypress National Preserve and Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge  
Proposed Acquisition of Collier Resources' Oil and Gas Rights**

**Talking Points:**

**General**

- ▶ The Department of the Interior and the Collier Resources Company have reached an agreement in principle to acquire Collier's mineral rights under Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, and Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge in Southwest Florida.
- ▶ Collier Resources will receive \$120 million in exchange for their mineral rights. The Collier family believes the resources are worth substantially in excess of this amount; the Agreement allows the Colliers to seek a tax donation, subject to the approval of the IRS, based on the excess value of the oil and gas rights.
- ▶ The Collier family is the primary holder of the mineral rights under Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida Panther NWR and Ten Thousand Island NWR. For example, the Colliers own all or a portion of the oil and gas rights within 79% of the sections (1 mile square) within Collier County alone - the county in which Big Cypress is located.
- ▶ Collier Resources has filed 27 plans of operation for exploration and production of these reserves (26 plans of operation are filed for Big Cypress and 1 plan is filed for Florida Panther).
- ▶ The Collier family's ownership of these mineral rights predates the establishment of the Preserve and their right to develop those rights was expressly grand-fathered by Congress when it created Big Cypress. Although the National Park Service may impose conditions on the development of oil and gas in Big Cypress, refusal to permit oil and gas exploration and production would subject the United States to significant takings claims.
- ▶ The State of Florida has taken the position that oil development in Big Cypress is not consistent with its coastal zone management plan. Numerous other parties oppose oil development in these protected areas as inconsistent with ongoing state and federal efforts to restore the Everglades ecosystem.
- ▶ Legislation is required to implement the agreement and we appreciate the support of the Florida delegation.

**The agreement complements everglades restoration efforts**

- ▶ Big Cypress National Preserve (728,915 acres), Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (27,003) acres and Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge (9,503 acres) comprise about 765,421 acres of subtropical Everglades habitat protecting the watershed

of Southwest Florida.

- These protected areas are adjacent to state and federally managed conservation areas, including the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve and Everglades National Park. They are home to several endangered species, including the Florida panther, the red-cockaded woodpecker, American crocodiles and manatees, and provide significant habitat for a diverse array of species. Numerous state and federal activities are now underway to protect and conserve these resources.
- Most recently, Congress authorized the \$8 billion Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (Comprehensive Plan) to restore, preserve and protect the Everglades and South Florida ecosystem by increasing the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water for the environment and other users. Several Comprehensive Plan components are to be undertaken in the vicinity of the Big Cypress National Preserve and Florida Panther NWR.
- Acquiring the Collier's oil and gas rights in Big Cypress, Florida Panther and Ten Thousand Islands will further protect these areas that have been set aside for the American people and complement state and federal actions to restore the Everglades.

#### **The agreement reflects a balanced approach to energy development**

- The agreement reflects the Administration's commitment to a balanced approach to resource development on public lands.
- Each situation is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Unlike ANWR, the oil and gas reserves at Big Cypress, Florida Panther and Ten Thousand Islands are limited and the natural resource value of the land is high.
- Big Cypress is an integral part of the greater Everglades ecosystem.
- MMS estimates that there are about 40 million barrels of conventionally recoverable oil under Big Cypress (as compared with 10.6 billion barrels in ANWR). Ongoing oil production at Big Cypress, which has been in existence for over a decade, is unaffected.

#### **The agreement conserves the Nation's natural resources by working cooperatively with private landowners**

- The Colliers have a long history of working with the state and federal governments to protect significant habitat in the Everglades ecosystem.
- This agreement is the latest in a series of measures that has resulted in conserving significant Everglades habitat for present and future generations, providing for a high quality of life in South Florida and ensuring continued recreational use of these important areas.